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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses issues involving the designing of new job training and education programs in central Appalachia in response to national policies for economic improvement. In March 1994, the Reemployment Act of 1994 was announced as the Clinton administration's response to problems caused by radical and worldwide economic restructuring. The goal is to focus on labor force preparedness through training highly skilled workers, in hopes of attracting capital investment. Data from West Virginia, the only state entirely within the central Appalachia region, indicate that high-paying jobs in coal mining, manufacturing, and other areas have declined by 22.5 percent, while lower-paying jobs have increased by 24.4 percent. Because of economic factors and changes in the labor market, women in this region are moving into a growing contingent labor force that offers little job security. Barriers to a highly skilled workforce in central Appalachia include low educational attainment and difficulties that preclude women from pursuing educational goals and job training opportunities. Interviews conducted with 44 eastern Kentucky women reveal that gendered statuses in families, poverty, the lack of support services for economically distressed families, sexism, classism, and domestic abuse have acted as barriers to educational attainment for these women. Suggestions include linking education and job training programs to changes in labor markets, providing job training programs aimed at meeting the needs of participants, increasing availability of support services, and strengthening desirable "informal" economic activities. (LP)

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Gender and Schooling in Appalachia: Historical Lessons for an Era of Economic Restructuring

by

Sally Ward Maggard

RESEARCH PAPER 9411

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ABSTRACT: This paper argues that past failures in manpower and job training programs in Appalachia, as well as low educational attainment in Central Appalachia are linked to the region's industrial history and gender relations. To avoid repeating these failures, new federal initiatives in work force training and education must intentionally address particular needs of displaced workers, new entrants in the work force, and communities suffering from economic restructuring.

RC 019723

GENDER AND SCHOOLING IN APPALACHIA: HISTORICAL LESSONS FOR AN ERA OF ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

Introduction

In March 1994, U.S. Secretary of Labor Robert Reich unveiled the Clinton Administration's design for "re-employing" U.S. workers. The "Reemployment Act of 1994" promises that we will retool our labor force and prepare workers for jobs in a new high waged, high skilled, highly productive economy.

The Reemployment Act and the proposed School-to-Work Opportunities Act are key parts of the administration's response to problems caused in the United States by radical and worldwide economic restructuring. Some two million U.S. workers are being "displaced" each year. For people who have been able to hang onto paying jobs, earning power has dramatically declined through the 1980s. New jobs have been created -- some 40 million of them -- but wages have declined by about 10 percent (Klein 1994, 33). University of Tennessee law professor Fran Ansley links such economic changes to the mobility of capital (Ansley 1993). Capital can be "deployed" with "breakneck" speed today, pulled out of one enterprise and moved clear around the world to another in a gamble to increase profits or to merely increase a margin of return on investments. The relocation of factories, industrial homeworking, subcontracting, and outsourcing leave skilled production workers competing for jobs with workers who earn dramatically lower wages, either in developing countries or in marginalized regions within industrialized nations.

A modern breed of capitalists makes such decisions to reorganize production. They know no loyalty to product, to nation, or to geographic region. In their hands, capital mobility has enormous destructive potential. It threatens serious harm to local communities, to workers, and to the environment as it is deployed at will in new areas and withdrawn from others.[1]

As a result, economic insecurity and workforce dislocation are serious problems with which we now struggle. Secretary of Labor Reich proposes that by focusing on labor force preparedness we can survive in this new economic era. Highly skilled workers, the argument goes, will attract capital investment in high waged production of goods and services. Such investment will be more stable since it will be anchored by superior work force qualifications.

What do these ideas and this new government commitment mean in Appalachia? How are we to move beyond these political agendas to actual practices which will bring economic security to families and individuals in the region?

For many economic planners, the path to the goal of re-employment is paved with plans for education and job training. In nearby Maryland, for instance, economist and planner Philip Favero works as State Extension Specialist at the Institute for Governmental Service. He voices the opinion of many observers when he argues for investments in education. Favero advises that the way to survive in an era of highly mobile capital is to beef up the qualifications of the work force: "The key to growth policy success... is to increase investments in human capital, in order to create a well educated, highly skilled work force" (Favero 1992).

It is an untested assumption that work force preparedness will anchor mobile capital, but even if we accept it for the moment we are left with many questions. What does it mean to retool a labor force? How do we train for the new jobs of the future which we imagine will exist? Do we re-train our current labor force for these new jobs, or do we focus on new entrants into the labor force? What sorts of education and teachers are required for the tasks of re-tooling? How, specifically, do we pull this national agenda down into the troubled localities in Central Appalachia where unemployment may run as high as 25 percent of the work force?

One model comes from the over 400 "Tech-Prep" programs instigated by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (Kiester 1993). Tech-Prep programs combine two years of high school with two years of vocational education. They focus on the "neglected majority" of high school students, as the Association calls them (Kiester 1993, 52), or "underachieving" high school students, as the Tech-Prep brochures in West Virginia describe them (WV Dept. of Education 1993).

As implemented in West Virginia, Tech-Prep combines vocational and technical programs with high school programs to create TPAD -- a Tech-Prep Associate Degree. The TPAD curriculum is designed to improve basic academic skills, train students in technical education skills, and deliver a "better educated work force" with "problem solving abilities". The program pledges to solve a "skilled-worker shortage" in the state by preparing students for "technician-level occupations". This training, WV-TPAD claims, will produce "a world-class work force".

Will such strategies affect economic growth in West Virginia? "Economic growth" is an elusive concept. It results from decisions that people make to invest (or disinvest) in existing businesses or create new business ventures. Who are these people? What shapes their decisions? Will skill-upgrade programs targeted to high school students influence investment decisions? Will "education investments" lure "economic investments" to a state like West Virginia in this era of worldwide capital mobility?

In on-going research I am studying the linkages between education, the labor market, and economic opportunity in Appalachia. This article considers the complexity of designing new job training and education programs in Central Appalachia in an era of global economic transformation. It examines patterns of economic change in the region, data on men's and women's economic status and educational attainment, women's experiences as they attend school and try to acquire marketable skills, and lessons from previous job training and educational programs.

Recent Economic Change in Appalachia

Economic problems in Central Appalachia resemble problems in other parts of the country, but the impact of restructuring here is often more acute than it is elsewhere. In general, there has been a dramatic decline in jobs in high paying industries, almost balanced by a rise in jobs in low paying industries. Unemployment is particularly high in local labor markets which have lost natural resource-based jobs and from which industrial capital has been withdrawn. This reflects the tendency among people displaced from high waged industries to fall out of the labor force. New low waged jobs, especially in service industries, attract new entrants into the labor force, often women.

Much of the region's workforce can be described as a "contingent" labor force (Polivka and Nardone 1989, 11). That is, a growing proportion of the labor force is employed intermittently in part-time, temporary jobs which lack social benefits. More and more workers hold down two or more part-time jobs in order to support families. With the decrease in earning capacity which has accompanied these shifts, there has been a increase in poverty.

Changes in the economy of West Virginia are illustrative. West Virginia is the only state that is entirely Appalachian, and, therefore, it is an important source of data for those interested in the region.

Where have all the "good jobs gone?

While the total number of jobs in the West Virginia economy remained fairly stable from 1980 to 1991, the mix of jobs changed dramatically. High paying jobs in mining, manufacturing, construction, transportation and financial services declined by 22.5 percent (down 71,033 jobs). Lower paying jobs in agriculture, retail and wholesale trade, and services increased 24.4 percent (by 72,427 jobs) (Table 1).

Table 1. Employment Profile: West Virginia 1980-1991			
	1980	1991	% change
Total Jobs in High Paying Industries	316,192	245,159	-22.5
Total Jobs in Low Paying Industries	296,346	368,773	+24.4
Unemployment Rate	9.4%	10.5%	+1.5

Source: Kids Count Data Book: 1993 County Profiles of Child Well-Being. West Virginia Task Force on Children, Youth and Families (WVTFCYF). Charleston, West Virginia. 1993.

Employment changes in the state from 1985 to 1990 dramatically illustrate these trends (Table 2). Coal mining areas have been hit by massive job loss, caused both by mine closings and by automation. From 1985-1990 employment in mining fell 21.7 percent (Table 2). Miners and communities dependent on mining wages suffer, not the industry. Automated mining technology has been introduced and productivity is at an all-time high (Maggard 1994). Employment in manufacturing has also declined. This is best illustrated by the 76.9 percent drop in jobs in textile mill products over five years (Table 2).

In contrast, jobs in amusement services, apparel and accessory stores, eating and drinking places, and health services each increased by over 20 percent from 1985 to 1990 in West Virginia (Table 2). "Back-office" development also generated jobs, helped along with special joint government and industry efforts to promote West Virginia's state-of-the-art fiber optic

Table 2. West Virginia Industry: Percentage Change in Employment 1985-1990	
Top Ten Performers	
Industry	Percentage Change
Social Services	50.0
Special Trade Contractors	25.3
Lumber, Wood Products	24.2
Health Services	24.1
Eating & Drinking Places	22.9
Apparel & Accessory Stores	20.8
Amusement Services	20.4
Hotels, Other Lodging	16.4
Miscellaneous Retail	16.3
Food Stores	14.8
Bottom Ten Performers	
Industry	Percentage Change
Apparel & Other Textile Products	-4.4
Food & Kindred Products	-6.7
General Merchandise Stores	-11.4
Chemicals & Allied Products	-11.5
Fabricated Metal Products	-13.9
Electronic, Electrical Equipment	-16.1
Oil & Gas Extraction	-19.3
Stone, Clay & Glass Products	-21.2
Coal Mining	-21.7
Textile Mill Products	-76.9

Source: "State of the West Virginia Economy". Culp, Linda, Fred Bingaman, Tom Witt, Center for Economic Research, West Virginia University. August 27, 1991. Prepared for Governor's Office of Community and Industrial Development.

and digital telecommunications systems (Maggard 1994). Each of these industrial sectors is characterized by low wages, a lack of job benefits, and no job security. Jobs are often part-time, temporary, subcontracted, non-union, and seasonal.

People who fill these jobs are part of a growing contingent workforce. Their jobs depend on employer demand. Employers who rely on a contingent work force avoid the costs of health insurance, sick leave, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, pensions, and retirement. Estimates are that using a contingent labor force reduces costs by 20 to 40 percent of the cost of hiring regular employees (Callahan and Hartmann 1991). But what may be attractive to employers translates into poverty inside households and communities in Appalachia.

Poverty among the working and the unemployed

In West Virginia, these changes have translated into reduced income. Median family income dropped by 3.9 percent from 1980 to 1990 (WVTFCYF 1993). These changes have also meant the loss of benefits and an overall reduced standard of living for individuals and communities. Many "coal counties" like McDowell are in crisis. McDowell County is in the middle of what we used to call the "Heart of the Billion Dollar Coalfields". But from 1980 to 1991, McDowell lost 71.9 percent of its high waged jobs. This is a truly alarming statistic, but the county also lost 22 percent of its low waged jobs. Unemployment in the county is 22.7 percent higher than the state average (11.4 percent in 1992)

(Yoder 1993). Median income fell by 27.5 percent, from $21,729 to $15,756 in the county (WVTFCYF 1993).

Poverty is on the rise, especially among women and children. West Virginia fell from 47th to 50th in per capita income between 1979 and 1989 (Center for Economic Research 1991). A stunning 55 percent of families with a female head (with related children under the age of 18, no husband present) were below poverty level, an increase of 11.6 percent from the beginning of the decade (Lubman 1993a).

Responses

The "Greyhound Therapy"

Many people leave. In West Virginia forty four of the state's fifty five counties lost population in the last decade (U.S. Bureau of Census 1990). Enough people left that state that West Virginia lost one of its four U.S. House of Representative seats. But recent data indicate a reversal of this trend (Thompson 1993; Isserman and Sorenson 1994). Recent destination states like North Carolina and historical migration points like cities in the industrial midwest are also experiencing restructuring. Ron Eller of the University of Kentucky's Appalachian Center likes to describe the migration response to economic crisis as the "Greyhound therapy". But migration is failing as an alternative to bad times in the coalfields. Increasingly, laid off industrial workers in the U.S. have to

look overseas to find industrial jobs. When the choice is to follow a factory which has relocated to Mexico and to work there in sweatshop conditions and earn super-exploitive wages, people are deciding to stay home. Although some experts argue that labor mobility is a special strength in the U.S. economy (Passell 1992), Appalachian workers increasingly disagree.

Women, men, and economic change

There is a differential impact of restructuring by gender in Appalachia. Males have been the predominant household "breadwinners" in the region since early in the century, but they are losing their jobs. In contrast, women in the region are moving into the paid labor force in ever larger numbers (Maggard 1993).

West Virginia's female labor force participation rate has consistently been one of the lowest in the nation. In recent years, however, it has been increasing. There is some indication that the rate at which women are becoming active participants in the formal labor force may soon outstrip the national rate of increase among women.[2]

Women are moving into jobs as members of Appalachia's growing contingent labor force. Men are moving into the ranks of "discouraged workers", those unemployed workers who give up looking for jobs and are officially counted as out of the labor market. This dramatically disrupts traditional household relationships. Fragmented data from literacy teachers, workers in

women's shelters, and social service agencies reveal an increase in domestic violence and difficulties in renegotiating traditional domestic divisions of labor along gender lines.

Non-standard economic activity

The traditional model of employment in the U.S. has been of full-time, long-term, and family-waged work. Jobs which met this model have most often been reserved for some groups of white male working class, white collar, and professional workers (Ansley 1993, 1768:1842-1843). For these groups, restructuring now challenges this presumed norm. The dominant model of employment today more closely resembles the work experiences of minority populations and women. As waged work gets pulled away from economic security, individuals and households look for alternatives to survive.

A wide rage of non-standard economic activity is taking place at a grassroots level in the Appalachia and other parts of the country.[3] This includes illegal work producing marijuana, a resurgence in moonshine production, prostitution, drug sales, and poaching. Various kinds of "self-provisioning" are under way. This includes producing, hunting, and gathering for household consumption by picking berries, gardening, preserving food, raising livestock, hunting, cutting wood for fuel, scavenging coal, and sewing. Other informal production, hunting, and gathering results in exchange. Here, add gathering ginseng and rattlesnakes, making quilts and baskets and other crafts,

knitting, and repairing automobiles and machinery.

Flea markets and yard sales have expanded into a thriving alternative economy. Other work off-the-books is expanding. One group of unemployed West Virginia miners, for instance, recently pooled skills and resources to purchase equipment and transportation. They drive to defunct steel towns and, for cash, dismantle shut down steel mills -- at great risk to their health and safety.

Reciprocal work is wide spread, especially along kinship and neighborhood lines. People share elder care, child care, invalid care, transportation, cash loans, job referrals, home repair, home building, and moving assistance. At a community level, people organize social services such as health clinics, child care, and youth programs. They also organize oral history projects, industrial recruitment programs, economic seminars, and self-assessment projects to identify community resources.

Often people combine these activities with other sources of income and economic support. Unemployment, worker's compensation, disability, welfare, food stamps, black lung benefits, and social security rarely cover minimal household survival needs. This "creative" combination of non-standard and transfer payment income may be technically "illegal", but increasingly it is necessary to keep households functional.

As restructuring deepens, it is becoming more and more difficult to distinguish between "formal" and "informal" economic spheres, between "standard" and "non-standard" economic

activity. The notion that there is a formal economy separate and distinct from informal economic activity is loosing coherence in the context of current economic change.

Clearly, the economic realities of this era of restructuring call for a careful link between any new job training programs, the structure of local labor markets, and economic growth policies. Without this link, people will train for jobs which do not exist or for jobs which are being eliminated and are no longer relevant in the new U.S. economy.

Educational Attainment

Retooling and upgrading the skills and educational levels of the labor force are at the heart of many new economic growth policies, including the Re-employment Act of 1994. What is our recent record on educational attainment and school reform?

Central Appalachia has struggled with poorly funded public schools and high rates of school drop out. In recent years, however, some parts of the region have made progress in dealing with these problems. In Kentucky and West Virginia, successful challenges to school finance formulas and allotments have resulted in reorganization of state departments of education and an infusion of new support for poor school districts.

In addition, West Virginia has made important progress since 1980 in reducing its percentage of high school dropouts. In 1980

just over one quarter of all high school students in the state dropped out (25.6 percent). In 1991 that had fallen to 16.6 percent, representing a 35 percent improvement in the dropout rate over the decade (WVTFCYF 1993).

Still, in 1993 West Virginia ranked 48th nationally in the precentage of adults having completed four years of high school (Zeller and Smith 1993). A high proportion of the state's labor force has less than a high school degree or has no formal training beyond the high school diploma (Table 3). In 1990, 23 percent of men in the labor force had less than a high school education and 41 percent had no education beyond the high school diploma. Among women in the labor force, 15 percent had not completed high school and 41 percent had not gone beyond high school.

Table 3. Educational Attainment of West Virginia Labor Force Participants, 1990: Percent of Men vs. Percent of Women

	% Males	% Females
Less than High School	22.7	15.2
High School Diploma	40.7	40.8
Some College	20.9	27.6
Bachelor's Degree	9.8	9.9
Grad/Professional Degree	6.0	6.5

Source: U.S. Census, 1990

In McDowell County where coal mining has been the dominant occupation for decades, 47 percent of men in the labor force in

1990 had not completed high school and 34 percent had not gone beyond high school. Among women, 25 percent had less than a high school education and 46 percent had not gone beyond their high school degrees (U.S. Census 1990). McDowell County is one of eight West Virginia counties in which less than 55 percent of the population 25 and over has graduated from high school. The other seven are also "coal counties" (Boone, Clay, Lincoln, Logan, Mingo, Webster, Wyoming) (Lubman 1993b).

These data indicate that it is important to understand the factors which discourage educational attainment in the region. Linking job training to expanding or new job markets is but one of the keys to designing successful job training programs. Additional factors which influence people's experiences of education programs and schooling must be considered.

Women and Schooling

Research on the role of gender in the social reproduction of Appalachian poverty reveals that gender influences the ways that women acquire or fail to acquire marketable skills and education (Maggard 1990). Interviews I conducted with forty-four eastern Kentucky women about their work histories and experiences in schools and job training programs illustrate ways that schooling gets sacrificed to gender roles and expectations about women's responsibilities in households. All of these women had been

active in union organizing drives, one at a hospital and the other at a coal mine.[4] Their interviews reveal that school is understood through a "gendered" lens in their households and communities. The education of female members of households is rarely a "family" priority. Instead, roles inside families override individual desires women have to stay in school, to enroll in professional or semi-professional courses of study, to enter job training and technical skills programs, and to pursue advanced degrees.

At the time of their involvement in the strikes, the women interviewed had been working as homemakers (unwaged), nurse's aides, cooks, kitchen helpers, housekeepers, and clerical workers. Some had never held paying jobs. Many had held a wide array of low-waged, service sector jobs. None had graduate or professional degrees. Six had completed high school, and ten had one to three years of high school. Twenty had completed only the eighth grade. Eight had less than eight years of school. Ten had been enrolled in some kind of manpower training programs.

The most common reason the women cited for quitting public school was <u>poverty</u>. Many women said they simply could not afford to attend school. For example, one woman raised five daughters holding down a full time job as a nurse's aide and moonlighting in various part-time service jobs. She said: "I had started high school. They'd be seven of us in the family and I really couldn't afford [school]. So I just got a job. Started doing restaurant work."

A woman who was a homemaker explained why she quit school in the eighth grade: "Well, my grandmother couldn't afford to send me to high school. That's the reason I didn't go." Another homemaker who was a leader in the coal strike said, "I didn't get no education. For people were poor. I had to walk off the top of that mountain, come over here to school. I got the primer, half the fifth and half the sixth."

Another coal strike leader had been a very good student, but she ignored her school principal's objections and quit. "I promised the principal at the high school that I would come back and take the test and go on to graduate," she said. "I really and truly thought I would, because he had told me he didn't want me to leave." She went on to explain:

> I was tellin' him, "No, I can make $35 a week baby sitting." I had to buy all the school clothes I had. Any food that I had at school I had to buy because Dad just couldn't make it. When the mines worked, they didn't work enough for the men to support the size family that my mother and daddy had.

Other women told of <u>family crises</u> which worsened their families' already difficult financial situations. A nurse's aide said, "I left home to work. I worked for people, because our home burnt up and we lost everything we had. So I had to quit school and go to work." A strike created the crisis that led one of the women to quit:

> I was going to high school. We was up in Michigan working then. [I got] three years. Wished I'd went plumb through. But dad was on strike, and they didn't have much money. I knew I couldn't afford it. So I just quit. Sometimes I wished I could have went back and got my education. Anybody needs one anyway to get a job.

This woman reared seven children, and at the time I interviewed her she had just told a potential employer: "I don't have any

skills but raising kids."

Another woman worked over thirty years as a nurse's aide. Her mother's illness led her to drop out of school. To explain her decision she said, "My mother got real sick and had to have surgery. For two years [she] wasn't able to do anything. I just quit school and took all the responsibility of the family."

Usually family crises were interpreted in gender terms. Female children quit school to assume work which was necessary to keep households viable. One woman, who still dreams of becoming a nurse, said, "I went about two weeks [high school] and quit. Daddy was sick. When he couldn't work we couldn't afford to go. I stayed home and helped Mommy out with him."

A woman who worked many years as a hospital cook quit school after the eighth grade. She said, "After my mother died I didn't get to go. See, I was the only girl among six brothers. I was the only girl at home." She talked at length about enjoying the small country schools she had attended. Still there was no question that she, rather than one of her brothers, would quit school when her mother died.

As children, these women sacrificed school and took over household management during times of family hardship. As adults, they repeated this pattern of personal sacrifice. Their gendered status in households and family units continued to take priority over their own desires for further education.

One woman has made several attempts to become a Registered Nurse. Initially, she learned her nursing skills by training as a "Girl in Blue" during World War II. In the early 1960s she took additional training under the federal Manpower and Development Training Act: "I got paid while I was going to school that time." Later, while the hospital strike interrupted her job, she completed one year at a community college toward an RN. She could afford school while she was on strike because her union strike benefits amounted to more than she earned working full-time as a nurse's aide.

It was clear during her interview that this woman was proud

of her work as a student: "I carried a whole load, full load, sure did. Fundamentals of nursing and med-surg. Everything." It was also clear that she loved school and her experiences training toward becoming a Registered Nurse:

> I was off from school a long time before I even attempted that RN. I only took the eighth grade. Then I took the GED and passed it! That's what I got in the college on, and a letter from Dr. Ratliff that I was one of his special nurses. But then I got hired back at the hospital. I've got all my books, honey. Some of them wanted me to sell them. They said, "Why don't you just sell them?" I said, "Uh huh. I want to keep my books.

She retired at age sixty five. Recently she learned she could go back to the community college without paying. "I could finish it and not even have to pay," she said. "But, my husband don't want me to. Somebody is all the time blocking me for what I've always dreamed about."

Another nurse's aide tried to return to school to become a Licensed Practical Nurse. She had dropped out of high school because of a family crisis. Married at the time of her interview, family difficulties interfered once again:

> I went and signed up and was accepted. My youngest son had to have his appendix taken out and had to have surgery. So that knocked me out there. That's the reason I didn't go on. I couldn't leave my baby. I'd a went on made a LPN if it hadn't been for that.

In their youth and as adults, these women were expected to manage and support households rather than pursue their own education or develop marketable skills and qualifications. They faced serious role conflicts and tensions between their statuses as members of families and their individual desires to attain an education and job skills.

This research reveals that a culturall supported division of labor by gender operates as a barrier for women who want to acquire skills and an education and that job trining programs must recognize this kind of obstacle. In addition, there are other gender and class related reasons schooling and job training

have been difficult for these women.

One woman worked for years as a hospital kitchen helper. She described blatant sexism as the reason her education ended:

> I turned sixteen - like school started in fall and my birthday was in March. I would have been sixteen. Mommy didn't believe in girls getting a education. I turned sixteen, and I had to quit and stay home. I don't know why she believed that girls shouldn't get an education, but she just wouldn't let us go. She's got five girls and not a one of us graduated from high school.

When any of the women said they quit school to get married, in each case marriage was seen as a solution to other problems. One woman quit the eighth grade when she was eighteen and married a much older man to escape an abusive home situation. She said,

> I wasn't allowed to go anywhere by myself. Dad would whip me good. Dad was pretty rough on me. He would whip me and I guess, you know, when you're young - I took off. I wrote them and I told them I run off from home. Mom signed the papers for us to get married.

In most instances, however, a married daughter meant one less child to support in financially troubled households. One woman's father had been on strike trying to organize a coal mine. When the strike was lost her family was in serious trouble. She explained how this affected her schooling:

> They [coal company] started giving house notices [evictions]. So people had to move. My dad got this house in Knox County, and we moved down there. We did have it rough for a while. He applied for his miner's pension and the black lung, and that took time. My mom had to go out and do housework for people in order to make ends meet. There was three of us in high school at that time, and it was rough going. As far as making expenses meet, it was really hard. I stayed down there about six months, and we married.

Several of the women spoke of feeling uncomfortable in school because of status differences. They talked at length about "injuries" of class distinctions which pushed several of them to quit school. One woman said:

> I passed two years in the sixth grade. I didn't like that teacher. I threatened to whip her. Me, a young kid, wanting to fight her. I didn't like her attitude. To me, it was like she was better than the student. She had things, and she'd

> flaunt it. She just showed off. It turned me off. So I finally just married.

Another woman was active in her local PTA when I interviewed her. She was fighting a school consolidation plan which would move her own children into classes dominated by middle class children. She wanted to protect them from the "class pain" she had experienced. These interviews confirm similar observations in research by Wendy Luttrell (1993) with working class African American women in rural North Carolina and white women in urban Philadephia and earlier research by Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb (1972) with working class white males.

After the strikes were over, most of the women renewed their educational efforts, took job training, or became politically active in their communites. The unusual events of participation in the strikes broke through traditional understandings of gender roles. This disruption of the "expected" created a kind of free space in which women attempted to change their statuses.

This was most dramatic among women who had the least extensive histories of waged work and had worked primarily as homemakers. Many of these women took further schooling and training at nearby community colleges and at area vocational schools. At the time of her interview, one woman had nearly completed an undergraduate degree. She had enrolled at a community college under a federal support program. She said:

> I started out in Elementary Education. Last semester I decided I'm going to Business Administration. I sort of cross between the two. Some federal money was allocated for education. They'd pay for books, tuition. Anything you needed toward an education. That's when I really started back to school. I had thought about it for a long time. When the money was allocated I thought, "Well, somebody else is going to pay for it. Why not?" If nothing happens come December I'll have my Associates Degree. Then if I decide to go on then I can.

Another woman is determined to earn a Ph.D. She went to college after the coal strike, finished an undergraduate degree, and had almost completed a Master's Degree at the time of her

interview. "I was the first one [in family] to get a Bachelor's. My two brothers and a sister, they had Associates, but I was the first one to get a Bachelor's. I'm going to be the first to get a Doctorate. Let me tell you!"

For almost all of these women an education was something they valued. One of the women had dreamed of becoming a school teacher. Her comments reveal her regret and her longing for an education:

> We just really had a good time. We had a little slate and our slate pencils. I loved geography. I loved that other than anything else in our school. We would have spelling bees, and I couldn't wait until we got into that. Sometimes I would miss one being sick. Back then I had asthma or something bad in the winter time, and they wouldn't let me go. I'd have to walk from, it'd be about two mile and a half I'd have to walk to school. They wasn't no buses. I went to the fourth grade.

Gendered statuses in families in the coalfields, poverty, the lack of support services for economically distressed families, sexism, classism, and domestic abuse acted as barriers to educational attainment for these women. Still, the high value these women place on education and their active pursuit of new skills, education, and political involvement after the strikes suggest that there is a desire for educational opportunities. If these barriers are addressed in the new federal job training and educational initiatives, this research predicts high participation rates among coalfield women.

Women and Job Training Experiences

In the mid 1960s various employers, community colleges, and vocational training programs in Appalachia took advantage of a new National Manpower Development and Training program. Among the women I interviewed, ten had been involved in these programs. One had participated in a sewing project and the others had trained

for various positions in health services. In most cases this had helped them get low waged service jobs at a hospital. In no cases had the women found jobs which utilized their technical training.

One woman who wound up with a job in a hospital kitchen described her job training experience this way:

> I went to the unemployment office for work. Me and my husband separated, and I didn't have no way of keeping up the kids. They told me about this program they had going up at the hospital. They'd pay me for going to school. Special diet course: how to fix diets for diabetics, and people with heart trouble, and high cholesterol, and stuff like that. I really enjoyed it.
>
> After that was over they hired me there at the hospital. I was making just about the same as they was paying me through that government- minimum wage. I didn't use that [training]. It didn't help me a bit. The only way it helped me was getting the job. They did hire me after the program was over.

Another woman who was widowed at a young age had relied on Social Security to rear her son. In 1966 when this income was about to end, she followed the Manpower Training route to her job in a hospital. She said, "The dietary work. That was the work that, when I took the test for this training, I made high on. And of course dietary would work with hospitals." Through the training, she got a job in the hospital kitchen, although she, too, never worked planning diets.

In the labor market in which these women looked for employment, federal workforce training in the 1960s operated to subsidize labor force recruitment for low waged, unskilled service sector jobs. Many women held the jobs they found through these programs for a decade or more, but they were underemployed for the skills they had acquired and they usually earned less than minimum wages.

Research on the more recent Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA) reveals similarly disappointing results.[5] The federal General Accounting Office (1991) studied what happened to people trained under the JTPA. In over half the regions studied, only 9

percent of the women who participated received training for jobs which paid $7.00 o- more an hour (Rose 1993).

Research by the Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee (Merrifield et.al. 1991) also documents disappointing JTPA results. In 1988 a large apparel manufacturer closed its Blount County, Tennessee, plant and laid off eight hundred workers. A survey of one hundred of the women who lost their jobs revealed that only about one half had participated in JTPA training.

Many women did not enroll in the program because they needed to find work immediately to provide health insurance or to maintain family income. One woman cited health insurance as the major reason for not enrolling. She said, "I had to go back to work to get insurance. My husband's medicine is very high priced" (quoted in Merrifield et.al. 1991, 38). Another woman who felt she could not afford to participate said,

> I wanted to get into the medical field, to have something stable. I signed up for LPN classes but didn't go because I need a job, and didn't know how long it would be funded or I could draw unemployment... I didn't think I could afford to go (quoted in Merrifield et.al. 1991, 37).

The women who did participate found that the program did not prepare them for expected growth occupations like technical and paraprofessional jobs. Instead, they were trained in stereotypically "female jobs", like clerical work and nursing jobs. The researchers concluded that the training made no difference in the ability of participants to get full-time, good paying jobs. Nor did job training open up a wider range of job options.

Conclusions and Recommendations

New programs for labor force retooling and job training need to address past failures and at the same time they must be realistically wired into the changing economic context. Problems particular to Central Appalachia in an era of profound and rapid

economic change and lessons from past manpower training programs highlight several pressing recommendations.

First, any educational upgrade, job training, and school-to-work transition programs must be linked to the emerging structure of local labor markets and to economic growth policies which are influencing labor market change. If training is not linked to economic development with a dual emphasis on education and occupations, then we are likely to repeat earlier failures and pass people through programs which prepare them for non-existent jobs.

Second, a "self-sufficiency standard" should apply to job training programs. This is a recommendation advanced by the Washington, D.C.-based Coalition on Women and Job Training, an alliance of twenty seven national women's job training, labor, education, civil rights, and economic development organizations (Rose 1993). The Coalition argues that training programs must estimate wage and benefit needs for participants, adjusting them for regional cost of living and number of dependents. Programs should assess job opportunities and enroll participants in training specifically directed to meeting those job needs.

Third, a variety of support services must accompany training programs. Child care, transportation, health insurance, and family income support are obvious services to sustain economically distressed participants as they move through training and education programs. In addition, counseling and crisis intervention may be needed as economic dislocation heightens domestic violence and abuse. Programs must be particularly sensitive to location specific social and cultural factors -- including gender, class, and racial ideologies -- which affect educational attainment.

Fourth, desirable forms of non-standard economic activities should be supported and strengthened. This can include training, funding, credit, technical assistance, marketing, and licensing and regulatory assistance -- supports which can move grassroots, innovative development projects into viable economic options.

One particularly alarming concern has to do with the danger of creating an extreme bifurcation of the labor force. According to Tom Witt, economic director for the Center for Economic Research within WVU's Bureau of Business Research, the high waged, high skilled, high tech jobs of tomorrow are likely to be filled by new entrants to the work force: by energetic, flexible people who are well educated and young (Pastor 1994).

Where does this leave dislocated coal miners and laid off factory workers? Is their future in low waged "McJobs" -- greeting customers at the doors of the new Wal-Mart stores expanding across the region, working as dog catcher in Huntington, or mowing the lawns at Snowshoe Resort?

There is the danger that the labor force is segmenting into at least four tiers. At the top are the highly skilled and well educated workers of the "information age". At a second tier, there are people who complete training and education required for a wide range of technician and technical occupations. At the low waged end of the work force are displaced workers who "retrain" for inadequate jobs and make up the "contingent" labor force. Finally, outside of the formal labor market are people who survive in non-standard activities and piece together the resources to survive.

It is no simple task to create a "world class workforce" based on sustainable economic activity which translates to economic security. It is imperative that we intentionally address the needs displaced workers, new entrants to the work force, and communities. It is also imperative that we do this with broad-based, democratic participation in planning new economic policy and in designing the programs which will equip people to be active participants in the emerging economy.

ENDNOTES

1. The impact of global capital mobility on the Appalachian Region is detailed in Communities in Economic Crisis: Appalachia

and South, a collection of case studies and theoretical essays edited by John Gaventa, Barbara Ellen Smith, and John Willingham (1993). For an earlier work which called public attention to the problems of economic restructuring in the U.S. "industrial heartland" see Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison's The Deindustrialization of America (1982).

2. It is important to note that women's work has always represented crucial economic activity. Often, however, it has fallen outside standard measures of the "economically active population". For discussions of this problem see Waring (1988), Folbre and Wagman (1993), Bose (1987), and Beneria (1981); for an overview of women's work in West Virginia see Pudup (1990).

3. Literature on the "informal economy" is growing and conceptually diverse (see for example: Brown and Scase 1991; Portes et.al. 1989; Christensen 1988). Many kinds of activities get lumped under the phrase. I prefer to use "non-standard economic activity" to describe the wide array of grass-roots economic strategies we are seeing in response to de-industrialization in Appalachia. Much of it is highly organized and "informal" only in the sense that it may fall outside traditional employer-employee wage relationships and government regulation. My discussions of varieties of "non-standard economic" activity and later on the segmentation of the labor force draw heavily from my ongoing collaborative work with Professor Ansley. We are studying the surge of informal economic activity in the wake of economic restructuring in Appalachia and

implications for economic policy.

4. From 1986 through 1988 I conducted a comparative study of women's involvement in two union organizing drives which resulted in strikes in eastern Kentucky in the early 1970s. One was a United Mine Workers of America strike at Duke Power Company's Brookside coal mine in Harlan County, and the other was a Communications Workers of America strike at the Pikeville Methodist Hospital in Pike County (Maggard 1988). Data used in this article come from structured interviews with twenty women in the coal strike and twenty-four women in the hospital strike.

5. The Job Training Partnership Act of 1982 was intended to retrain dislocated workers in new job skills. In 1989 this mission was transferred to the Economic Dislocation and Worker Adjustment Assistance Act.

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